

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

/060 W

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R 201230Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0396

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 1931

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: AFTERMATH OF MID STATEMENT

REF: BA 1751

1. SUMMARY: MID STATEMENT OF MARCH 12 (SEE REFTEL) SO FAR HAS PROVED TO BE MOST INTERESTING POLITICAL NEWS THIS MONTH. COMING AS IT DID AT MORE OR LESS SAME TIME AS NUMBER OF CRITICAL STATEMENTS FROM OTHER PARTIES, IT DRAMATICALLY POINTED UP FACT THAT GOVERNMENT IS NOT FUNCTIONING AS HOPED AND THAT OPEN CRITICISM IS INCREASING. MID MAY OR MAY NOT LEAVE OR BE FORCED OUT OF FREJULI AS A RESULT OF STATEMENT. SINCE FREJULI HAS NOT BEEN A FUNCTIONING, COHESIVE BODY FOR SOME TIME ANYWAY (ESPECIALLY WITH CONGRESS NOT IN SESSION), THAT IS NOT PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT FROM PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW. PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF MID DEPARTURE WOULD BE SOMETHING ELSE AGAIN HOWEVER. END SUMMARY.

2. THE MID'S POINTED CRITICISM OF MRS. PERON'S GOVERNMENT LAST WEEK HAS CAUSED SOMETHING OF A MINOR SENSATION IN POLITICAL CIRCLES HERE. BA HERALD DESCRIBED IT AS COURAGEOUS AND DEVASTATING IN ITS ACCURACY. SURPRISINGLY, PRO-PERONIST MAYORIA ALSO CAME VERY CLOSE TO ENDORSING IT. IN ITS EDITORIAL OF MARCH 14 MAYORIA POINTED OUT THAT SUCH CRITICISM HAD TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY WHEN IT CAME FROM A

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PARTY SUCH AS THE MID, WHICH WAS SUCH A LOYAL MEMBER OF

FREJULI THAT IT HAD INTERVENED ITS OWN PROVINCIAL PARTY ORGANIZATION IN MISIONES BECAUSE LATTER INSISTED ON RUNNING ITS OWN SLATE RATHER THAN SUPPORTING THE FREJULI CANDIDATES.

3. OTHER PERONISTS WERE LESS GENEROUS. SEVERAL PERONIST CONGRESSMEN DESCRIBED THE MID STATEMENT AS "TREASONOUS" AND AS A "STAB IN THE BACK". INTERIOR MINISTER ROCAMORA SAID IT WAS IMPROPER AND THAT THE MID SHOULD FIRST HAVE CONSULTED WITH THE OTHER MEMBERS OF FREJULI--ESPECIALLY, OF COURSE, WITH THE PERONIST MAJORITY. TO WHICH THE MID REPLIED THAT THEY HAD BEEN TRYING UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR SEVERAL WEEKS TO CONSULT WITH THE PERONISTS; INDEED, THEY SAID, IT WAS PRECISELY THE PERONIST ABANDONMENT OF DIALOGUE AND CONSENSUS POLITICS WHICH HAD RENDERED THEIR STATEMENT NECESSARY.

4. THERE WAS IMMEDIATE SPECULATION THAT THE MID MOVE SPELLED THE END OF FREJULI. FERDINANDO PEDRINI, CHIEF OF THE FREJULI BLOC IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, SAID ON MARCH 17 THAT WHILE HE CONSIDERED THE MID TO HAVE TAKEN THE PATH OF DISLOYALTY, AS YET THERE HAD BEEN NO FORMAL MOVE TO EXPEL THEM FROM THE FREJULI. SUCH A MOVE, HE SAID, WOULD HAVE TO COME FROM THE PERONIST MOVEMENT. ON FEB 11N HOWEVER, PERONIST CONGRESSMAN EDUARDO FARIAS SENT LETTERS TO LASTIRI AND PEDRINI REQUESTING THAT ACTION BE INITIATED TO EXPEL THE MID. SO FAR, NO ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN ON FARIAS' PETITION. FOR THEIR PART, THE MID CONTINUES TO INSIST THAT IT WILL REMAIN IN THE FREJULI.

5. GIVEN THAT THE UCR, SUELDO'S PRC, GHIOLDI'S PSD, MANRIQUE'S FEDERALISTAS, THE COMMUNISTS, AND A NUMBER OF OTHERS, SUCH AS ALVARO ALSOGARY, HAVE ALSO RECENTLY ISSUED STATEMENTS WHICH IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENT, THE LATTER MAY WELL CONSIDER THAT TO ANSWER ALL WOULD CREATE SUCH AN OVERWHELMING IMPRESSION OF BEING ON THE DEFENSIVE THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO ANSWER NONE, INCLUDING THE MID. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THE MID IS SOMETHING OF A CASE APART. IT IS A MEMBER OF THE RULING FREJULI COALITION AS THE OTHERS ARE NOT. THUS, SOME SORT

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OF DISCIPLINARY ACTION WOULD SEEM LIKELY

6. REACTION OF THE OTHER PARTIES HAS BEEN INTERESTING-- IF RATHER DISCOURAGING IN ITS PORTENT FOR THE CONSENSUS. DESPITE THE FACT THAT THEY THEMSELVES HAD ALSO COME OUT WITH CRITICAL STATEMENTS, THE PRC SCATHINGLY DISMISSED THE MID DOCUMENT AS TREASONOUS AND THE UCR CALLED IT GOLPISTA. THE COMMUNIST PARTY COMPLAINED THAT MID

HAD CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENT'S SUCCESSES RATHER THAN ITS FAILURES. WHILE IRONIC, THIS NEGATIVE RESPONSE WAS NOT SURPRISING, ESPECIALLY ON THE PART OF THE UCR. BALBIN AND FRONDIZI STILL NURTURE A BURNING HATRED FOR ONE ANOTHER AND RARELY IF EVER ANYTHING GOOD TO SAY ONE ABOUT THE OTHER. BALBIN ON MARCH 17 COULD NOT RESIST COMPARING FRONDIZI TO A RAT LEAVING A SINKING SHIP (COMPARISON WHICH HAD ALREADY CROSSED THE MINDS OF SOME PERONISTS--SEE BELOW). MOREOVER, THE OTHER PARTIES WERE ONLY PAYING BACK THE MID IN KIND, FOR THE LATTER HAD IN ITS STATEMENT MADE SNIDE REFERENCES ABOUT THE OPPOSITION PARTIES, DESCRIBING THEM AS TAME AND COMPLIANT. THE OVERALL IMPRESSION CREATED BY THIS NAME CALLING AND BICKERING WAS NOT ELEVATING. AS ONE PRESS OBSERVER PUT IT SADLY: "IT'S AS THOUGH ARGENTINE POLITICS HAD RETURNED TO THE PAST AND THE CONSENSUS HAD NEVER EXISTED."

7. COMMENT: WHETHER OR NOT THE MID QUILTS OR IS EXPELLED FROM THE FREJULI, ITS DAYS AS A TRUSTED, INTEGRAL PART OF THE ALLIANCE ARE CLEARLY OVERM FREJULI ITSELF, WHILE STILL OFFICIALLY ALIVE, HAS BEEN RENDERED MORIBUND BY MRS. PERON AND LOPEZ REGA'S ALMOST TOTAL DISINTEREST IN THEIR SMALLER ALLIES. HENCE, FROM A PRAGMATIC VIEWPOINT, WHETHER MID LEAVES ITS RANKS OR NOT IS OF LITTLE SIGNIFICANCE.

8. PERHAPS THE MOST POIGNANT ANALYSIS OF THE MID STATEMENT WAS VOICED BY A LONG-TIME PERONIST CONTACT WHO SAID: "THE STATEMENT IS NOT SO SIGNIFICANT IN ITSELF SINCE THE ENTIRE MID COULD MEET IN A FOOTBALL STADIUM. IT IS SIGNIFICANT IN ANOTHER SENSE HOWEVER. RATS ALWAYS LEAVE A SINKING SHIP AND FRONDIZI IS ALWAYS THE FIRST TO LEAVE. THE FACT THAT HE IS GOING OVER THE RAIL SHOULD TELL US THAT OUR SHIP IS GOING DOWN FASTER
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THAT WE HAVE REALIZED."
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTES, POLITICAL PARTIES, PARTY LEADERS, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, PARTY ORGANIZATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: woolflhd
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BUENOS01931
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750098-0403
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750333/aaaabduq.tel
Line Count: 156
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BA 1751
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: woolflhd
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 SEP 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <19 DEC 2003 by woolflhd>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AFTERMATH OF MID STATEMENT
TAGS: PINT, AR, MID, (PERON, MARIA ESTELA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006